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Remarks on March 2, 2011 Guilty Pleas

I. Introduction

Good afternoon and thank you all for being here today. My name is Tim Heaphy, the United States Attorney for the Western District of Virginia. I am joined by a number of others who work in law enforcement in this community - our partners in the ongoing struggle to keep Charlottesville and the surrounding areas safe.

I have asked you all here today to talk about drugs - an issue that unfortunately continues to plague this and many other communities. I want to talk first about a very significant drug case that involves the importation of heroin, crack cocaine and powder cocaine into the Charlottesville area from as far away as New York. I want to tell you about the case, identify the major players and talk about the significance the prosecution of this conspiracy will have on the local illegal drug market.

I also want to talk about the broader context in which this case and others like it emerge - a culture of drug abuse and addiction which allows conspiracies like this to flourish. In addition to arresting those that profit by selling drugs, we are working hard in our office and throughout the Department of Justice to bring prevention and treatment solutions to drug-ravaged communities. I'll talk a bit more about this effort today.

II. Barnes Case

This morning, Rodney Barnes, a resident of Queens, New York, pled guilty in U.S. District Court to charges related to his involvement in a drug distribution conspiracy that stretched from the streets of Charlottesville to the high-rises of New York.

Two of Barnes' associates, Larry Jackson and Kasheen Osborne, also pled guilty this morning, bringing the total number of convicted drug dealers involved in this conspiracy to 15.

Each of the 15 defendants have admitted their role in bringing cocaine and heroin into the Charlottesville area and distributing it over an extended period of time.

These defendants operated a business - a very profitable, illegal business. Like any other business, they had a hierarchy, complete with bosses, workers, and customers. Rodney Barnes was the boss - the kingpin of the conspiracy. He was responsible for acquiring the product - crack cocaine, powder cocaine and heroin - which was the bread and butter product of this business. He supervised the work of others,

each of whom played a part in the distribution of that cocaine and that heroin. He also collected the money - lots of money - as this poison was pumped into the neighborhoods of our community.

Barnes did a bit more than supervise. He occasionally transported crack cocaine, powder cocaine and heroin from his hometown of New York City, into our hometown of Charlottesville. He also used associates like Kasheen Osborne to bring cocaine and heroin down from New York to be distributed throughout Charlottesville. These men traveled from New York to Richmond by bus with the drugs in their possession. Members of the conspiracy would then drive from Charlottesville to the Richmond bus station to pick-up the shipment of drugs and bring them here for distribution.

When the drugs arrived in Charlottesville, the Barnes operation created a distribution network to get the product to market. The sellers were in effect the cashiers at the counter - the ones who physically delivered the product to customers. Many of these sellers were local, as Barnes actively recruited drug users in Charlottesville to distribute both heroin and cocaine for him. Like other bosses, Barnes paid these users to distribute his cocaine and his heroin, while he sat back and collected the money, though, there were times when Barnes himself sold both cocaine and heroin. These dealers opened their homes to Barnes and even registered cars in their own names in order to drive him around Charlottesville.

Barnes often paid these hand-to-hand drug sellers in drugs, rather than money. Barnes knew if his distributors were getting the drugs they needed to stay high, they would be loyal to him as dealers. As an example of this, many of the dealers working for Barnes in Charlottesville did not take a cut of the money being made from the sale of cocaine and heroin. Instead, they simply sold what they needed to repay Barnes and kept the remainder of the drugs for personal use.

By paying his workers in cocaine and heroin, Barnes preyed upon their weakness and addiction. He fed these workers' addiction and kept them locked in a lifestyle of crime. Now, these drug sellers aren't victims. They do, however, suffer from a handicap of sorts - the powerful lure of addiction, which makes them susceptible to participating in the destructive cycle of further victimization.

These addicts sold Barnes' cocaine and heroin all over this community. They penetrated areas that we don't typically associate with cocaine and heroin - places like Woodbrook, Altavista, Wertland, 10th and Page and Greenbrier.

In all, during the life of the conspiracy, Barnes and his associates brought over 3 kilograms of cocaine and heroin into Charlottesville. Those drugs were brought here illegally and sold to our residents, on our streets. In addition, it further causes the community harm by placing more cocaine and heroin into our neighborhoods, keeping others trapped in the addictive lifestyle vultures like Barnes feed on. The rise in local residents addicted to cocaine and heroin is a stepping off point for further criminal activities like burglary, robberies and a variety of property crimes.

Rodney Barnes and his criminal associates made a lot of money selling cocaine and heroin in our community. As with the transportation and distribution of the product, they did it with organization and structure. After selling the cocaine and heroin which Barnes had provided to them, the dealers would deposit the proceeds in a bank account in Virginia - literally deposit cash at bank branches all over this

community. Barnes and Osborne would later withdraw that money from banks in New York City. Most of the assets were funneled back into the organization and stayed in New York. Again - this is an organized business. Mr. Barnes attempted to insulate himself from the dirty work of street-level selling. He didn't even have to be present to collect the money. Rather, he could stay in the relatively anonymity in New York, which his drug-addict sellers turned the wheels of this dirty business.

In short, Barnes came to Charlottesville for one reason and one reason only: he knew that we had the elements in which he could grow a successful drug-selling franchise. Drug dealing is inherently dangerous. Dealers are targeted for other sorts of crimes, as they don't typically call the police when they are robbed, or victimized. Barnes bragged to some of his co-conspirators that he felt so safe in Virginia that he didn't even carry his gun when delivering his drugs. Barnes was right about that. This is a safe community. Barnes preyed upon that relative safety and planted a flag of destruction in our community. He came into our community from the outside, and he tried to peel away that sense of safety. He facilitated and encouraged addiction. And he took our money back to New York.

But this investigation and successful prosecution did so much more than just shut down Barnes' crime spree here in Charlottesville. He, and others associated with the conspiracy operated similar conspiracies in Norfolk, Manassas and Wilmington, N.C. These were franchises of the Barnes drug business. Thanks to our prosecution here in the Western District, the drugs have stopped flowing to those locations as well.

Barnes was ultimately unsuccessful, however, in getting away with his victimization and running this drug business for too long. Thanks to the hard working men and women who investigate criminals like Mr. Barnes and his co-conspirators, he is behind bars today. This case has produced 15 guilty pleas. Fifteen individuals who choose to break the law and sell cocaine and heroin will now justly spend time in federal prison for their actions.

I want to recognize the officers who worked so hard to penetrate and dismantle this criminal organization. The Jefferson Area Drug Enforcement Task Force led by its supervisor Lt. Don Campbell and the two primary agents who began this investigation and who saw it through to a successful conclusion, Det. Jon McKay of the Albemarle County Police Department and Det. Brian O'Donnell with the Charlottesville Police Department deserve a great deal of recognition and thanks. I also want to thank Joe Platania, an Assistant Commonwealth Attorney for the City of Charlottesville and Elliott Casey, an Assistant Commonwealth Attorney for Albemarle County. These two men led a great coordinated effort between state and federal prosecutors in bringing this conspiracy to justice.

I salute all of you for your outstanding work on this case. Because of you, we are still a safe community. You ensure that the people who live in Woodbrook, Altavista, Greenbrier, and the other areas in which this conspiracy operated can enjoy peace and safety in their neighborhoods. Thank you for your efforts in this case, and for your service to the community.

III. Other Significant Drug Prosecutions

While the prosecution of these 15 individuals is a huge step in our battle against illegal drugs, it's just one step. We have many more steps to take. We live in a wonderfully safe, vibrant community. Good schools, economic opportunity, the beauty of nature right outside our back doors. But even in places like Charlottesville, drug abuse lives. No community is immune from this scourge. No place that I've seen has been able to completely resist the devastating lure of drugs.

I've been U.S. Attorney for about a year and a half now, and I've traveled all over the western half of Virginia. I've seen the many faces of drugs and drug addiction in the diverse communities in our district. As the Barnes matter illustrates, we have had a significant amount of cocaine and heroin in the neighborhoods of this community. The problem looks different, however, in the Shenandoah Valley, where methamphetamine is manufactured in basement labs or transported into rural counties by Mexican drug cartels. In Southwest Virginia, many communities are struggling with a tremendous and frightening increase in the abuse of prescription pain medication. Medications like OxyContin, Roxicet, and other prescription drugs are routinely ground and snorted. This medicine is highly addictive and has done considerable damage in rural communities in the farthest reaches of our state.

Our office has been engaged in all of these communities. We have had success in dismantling a sophisticated methamphetamine conspiracy in Harrisonburg, as well as a network of pain medication sellers in Abingdon. Recently, our office prosecuted over a dozen individuals who were operating a crack cocaine conspiracy in Roanoke that included not only the distribution of narcotics but violent home invasions of rival drug dealers. Unfortunately, the list of drug conspiracies prosecuted by this office is too long to list here today. It is for that reason that the prosecution of these cases is so important to our communities.

We have focused our enforcement resources on these large, sophisticated, multi-level conspiracies in an attempt to apprehend those who really make money from this awful business - the Rodney Barnes of the world. These cases are complicated and time-consuming. They require the skilled investigative work and sound judgment of officers like those behind me. They matter, however, as they send a signal to the aspiring Rodney Barnes of the world that there's a risk to this kind of business activity. When drug dealers think about how easy and safe it is to sell drugs in Charlottesville, they will have to factor the real risk of apprehension and incarceration. Our goal is to make that calculus more difficult for the drug sellers - so that they will not decide it's safe to work in this community. We want them to feel unsafe in Charlottesville, and everywhere else in the Western District of Virginia.

IV. Prevention

While all of this enforcement activity is critical to our success, anyone who works in law enforcement will tell you that we cannot simply arrest our way out of this terribly difficult problem.

In addition to incarcerating drug dealers, we must do more to impact demand for their product. We must have strong “front end” programs in place to dry up the market in which these awful businesses thrive. We need to tackle the drug problem with viable prevention efforts, to ensure that young people have alternatives to selling drugs. Intervening in the lives of our young men and women is so important, as they need examples of why a good education and a decent job is a more satisfying path than the easy but uncertain buck that comes with selling drugs. We need to provide support for organizations which work with young people - groups which provide educational, recreational, and vocational programming to at risk youth. We will never be able to eliminate the possibility that our children will be exposed to drugs and drug abuse. We can, however, give them the tools they need to resist the lure of drugs and aim higher.

In addition to at-risk youth, we need to do what we can to provide viable treatment options for people who are serious about tackling their addiction. Drug courts like the one in Charlottesville are a good example of the kind of program that works. The concept is simple - when you help people escape the cycle of addiction and support their effort to live a productive, crime-free life, you reduce the demand for drugs that lines the pockets of men like Rodney Barnes. We need to support the many treatment programs and organizations in our community, as they work every day to help people struggle with this difficult problem. These programs are a crucial part of the solution to the drug problem in this community and across the country.

I feel strongly that as a community it is our duty to help our friends and neighbors deal with addiction. It is our duty to provide them with access to services to help get them sober, get them employed and get them back to being productive Charlottesville citizens. We cannot simply lock them up and hope our problems go away. That theory has been tried and failed for years.

What works is a comprehensive approach - coupling enforcement efforts like the one that brought this case to a successful completion with prevention and treatment solutions. We have to match front and back end solutions to the drug problem within the same communities. One without the other is doomed to fail. Conversely, aiming both enforcement and prevention resources at afflicted communities will ensure our success. That’s what we’re trying to do in the Western District of Virginia.

To help implement this comprehensive approach to solving community problems, we have created a new program in our United States Attorney’s Office. We have created a position in our office - our Community Outreach Coordinator - and asked the Coordinator to spearhead our effort to bring prevention resources into communities across the district. We hope that this community outreach initiative will bring much-needed federal resources to community centers, YMCAs and addiction and re-entry programs to assist them in doing their important work and making a difference to our residents.

While it is early to measure success, we’ve seen evidence of the promise of this comprehensive approach. In communities throughout the Western District of Virginia, the Department of Justice presence is paying real dividends to local nonprofit groups. Just last week in Roanoke, 75 representative from local groups attended a United States Attorney’s Office sponsored grant writing training seminar. I

am confident some of those in attendance will be successful in the future and be awarded federal monies that will help provide much needed services to local residents.

V. Conclusion

Large-scale, multi-defendant and multi-jurisdictional prosecutions like the Barnes case should serve as an example to drug dealers throughout the country to stay out of the Western District of Virginia. You are not welcome here. Our community doesn't want you here. And if you come here, our hardworking law enforcement professionals will hunt you down and bring you to justice.

And as I said, we will not, to use a cliché, put all of our eggs in the enforcement basket. Those of us who work in public safety will continue to work to bring front end solutions to the problem of drug abuse and addiction in our communities. We will couple strong enforcement with viable prevention. We will continue to approach this problem in a comprehensive way, and hope that over time we will make an impact on communities where unfortunately, addiction still flourishes.

Thank you all for coming today, we will now answer any questions you may have regarding the Barnes case or broader anti-drug efforts.